Guelph-Wellington Food Security Action Plan

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PublicHealth
WELLINGTON-DUFFERIN-GUELPH
Stay Well.

OurFoodFuture
Guelph-Wellington

Contents

Purpose ... 3
Background ... 3
- Our Food Future's Shared Vision ... 3
- Nutritious Foods Workstream's Goal ... 4
- Key Concepts ... 4
- Community-Driven Approach ... 6
- Grounded in Research ... 6
- Funding Approaches ... 6

Success Stories ... 8
- Food System Resiliency Table (The Table) ... 9
- Food Equity with Dignity (FEWD) ... 9
- Groceries from The SEED ... 10
- Guelph Food Bank Hub and Spoke Collaborative Pilot Project ... 10

Identifying Strategic Priorities ... 11
Strategic Priority #1: Food Access & Healthcare ... 12
- Background ... 13
- Connections to Our Food Future's food access initiatives ... 14
- Proposed Action ... 15
- Outcome Statement ... 15
- Phases of Implementation Example ... 15

Strategic Priority #2: Local Food Infrastructure ... 16
- Background ... 17
- Connections to Our Food Future's food access initiatives ... 18
- Proposed Action ... 18
- Outcome Statement ... 18
- Phases of Implementation Example ... 19

Strategic Priority #3: Building a Circular Food Movement ... 20
- Background ... 21
- Connections to Our Food Future's food access initiatives ... 22
- Proposed Action ... 22
- Outcome Statement ... 23
- Phases of Implementation Example ... 23

Strategic Priority #4: Integrated Funding ... 24
- Background ... 25
- Connections to Our Food Future's food access initiatives ... 26
- Proposed Action ... 26
- Outcome Statement ... 26
- Phases of Implementation Example ... 27

Strategic Priority #5: Community Food Growing Strategy ... 28
- Background ... 29
- Connections to Our Food Future's food access initiatives ... 30
- Proposed Action ... 30
- Outcome Statement ... 30
- Phases of Implementation Example ... 31

Strategic Priority #6: Regenerative Agriculture ... 32
- Background ... 33
- Connections to Our Food Future's food access initiatives ... 34
- Proposed Action ... 34
- Outcome Statement ... 34
- Phases of Implementation Example ... 35

Conclusion ... 36
- Next Steps ... 37

References and Appendices ... 39
- References ... 40
- Appendix A ... 42
- Appendix B: Funded Food Access Initiatives ... 56
  - Theme 1: Physical Access Projects ... 56
  - Theme 2: Economic Access Projects ... 57
  - Theme 3: Nutrition Knowledge and Food Skills Projects ... 58
  - Theme 4: Food Marketing and Promotion ... 59

Purpose

This Action Plan includes background information describing Our Food Future's involvement in food access initiatives to date and identifies strategic priorities moving forward. The development of the Action Plan was informed by past research and consultations with key partners. This document is intended to:

- Guide the use of Our Food Future's remaining funds allocated to the Nutritious Foods Workstream
- Guide the work of other local food access workgroups/tables
- Be a tool to leverage for other funding opportunities
- Be a legacy of Our Food Future and the Nutritious Foods Workstream

The Action Plan, in combination with the work of the Waste as a Resource and Business Workstreams, **will create a shared plan for the next three years to guide the further development of a circular, healthy food system for all and continue the work of Our Food Future into the future.**

Background

Our Food Future's Shared Vision

Our Food Future is creating a circular food economy in Guelph-Wellington that:

- Values, shares, and celebrates a diversity of affordable, nutritious, and culturally relevant foods that support a healthy, resilient community
- Inspires and creates a thriving, circular, and regenerative economy
- Respects planetary boundaries by recognizing the impact of wasted resources and the value of what's being thrown away
- Enables the systems change required for a circular regional economy, beginning with the food system, through collective knowledge, governance, and action

Funding was awarded through Infrastructure Canada's Smart Cities Challenge around three goals:

1. Affordable, Nutritious Foods
2. Circular Businesses and Collaborations
3. Waste as a Resource

As the project evolved, a fourth goal of Systems Change was included to recognize the broader data, technology, infrastructure and behaviour change elements that are required to support the original three goals.

Nutritious Foods Workstream's Goal

The Nutritious Foods Workstream (NFW) is a group of social and health service organizations with a goal of increasing access to affordable nutritious foods by 50% by 2025 in Guelph-Wellington. The workstream recognizes that nutrition plays a major role in growth and development, mental health, and preventing lifestyle-related chronic diseases. As such, the workstream further refined the terms of the goal to include improving physical and economic access to nutritious food, increasing opportunities for nutrition education and skill-building, and improving promotion of nutritious foods. Following two years of research and engagement, these goals were updated in Our Food Future's 2022 Midterm Report. Moving forward the Nutritious Foods Workstream seeks to ensure that:

- Everyone can access nutritious, affordable, and culturally relevant food
- Food is valued, celebrated, and shared
- Circular business models support regenerative farming practices
- Urban agriculture increases local food security
- Community members are informed and empowered

Key Concepts

For the purposes of the work of the Nutritious Foods Workstream, the following definitions were used to describe **food security** and **food insecurity**.

In 1996, the World Food Summit in Rome stated "**food security** exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active, and healthy life."[1]

Food security is built on four dimensions[1]:

1. Physical **availability** of food: Food availability addresses the "supply side" of food security and is determined by the level of food production, stock levels and net trade.[1]
2. Economic and physical **access** to food: An adequate supply of food at the national or international level does not in itself guarantee household level food security. Concerns about insufficient food access have resulted in a greater policy focus on incomes, expenditure, markets and prices in achieving food security objectives.[1]
3. Food **utilization**: Utilization is commonly understood as the way the body makes the most of various nutrients in the food. Sufficient energy and nutrient intake by individuals is the result of good care and feeding practices, food preparation, diversity of the diet and intra-household distribution of food. Combined with good biological utilization of food consumed, this determines the nutritional status of individuals.[1]
4. Stability of the above three dimensions: Even if an individual's food intake is adequate today, they are still considered to be food insecure if they have inadequate access to food on a periodic basis, risking a deterioration of their nutritional status. Adverse weather conditions, political instability, or economic factors (unemployment, rising food prices) may have an impact on food security status.[1]

For food security to be realized, all four dimensions must be fulfilled simultaneously. As shown below in Figure 1, food security and food insecurity are not opposites. **Household food insecurity** is defined as insecure or inadequate access to food due to financial constraints.[2] Individuals and families living on low incomes struggle to pay for the rent, other basic living costs (such as utilities, phone, childcare, clothing, medication, transportation) and food. Food security is a community condition to strive for, while household food insecurity is one area for action to achieve food security for a whole community. It is worth noting that food insecurity is an important action area, but not the only area for action.

Based on the dimensions of food security, the Nutritious Foods Workstream believes that improving access to healthy, nutritious food requires targeted actions in the following areas:

1. Increase physical access to a range of culturally relevant nutritious foods in the places where residents live, work, learn and play so everyone can make healthy culturally relevant food choices.
2. Increase economic access to nutritious foods so everyone can afford a healthy diet.
3. Increase access to opportunities to acquire nutrition knowledge and food skills so that everyone can select and prepare healthy meals.
4. Increase promotion of nutritious foods so that these foods are valued, celebrated and shared, empowering everyone to eat well and reduce waste.

This workstream aspires to create a supportive environment where everyone can achieve food security. Guelph-Wellington's Food Security Action Plan describes actions funded to date in alignment with the dimensions of food security, as well as strategic priorities for the future that will continue to move the needle towards achieving food security for everyone in the region.

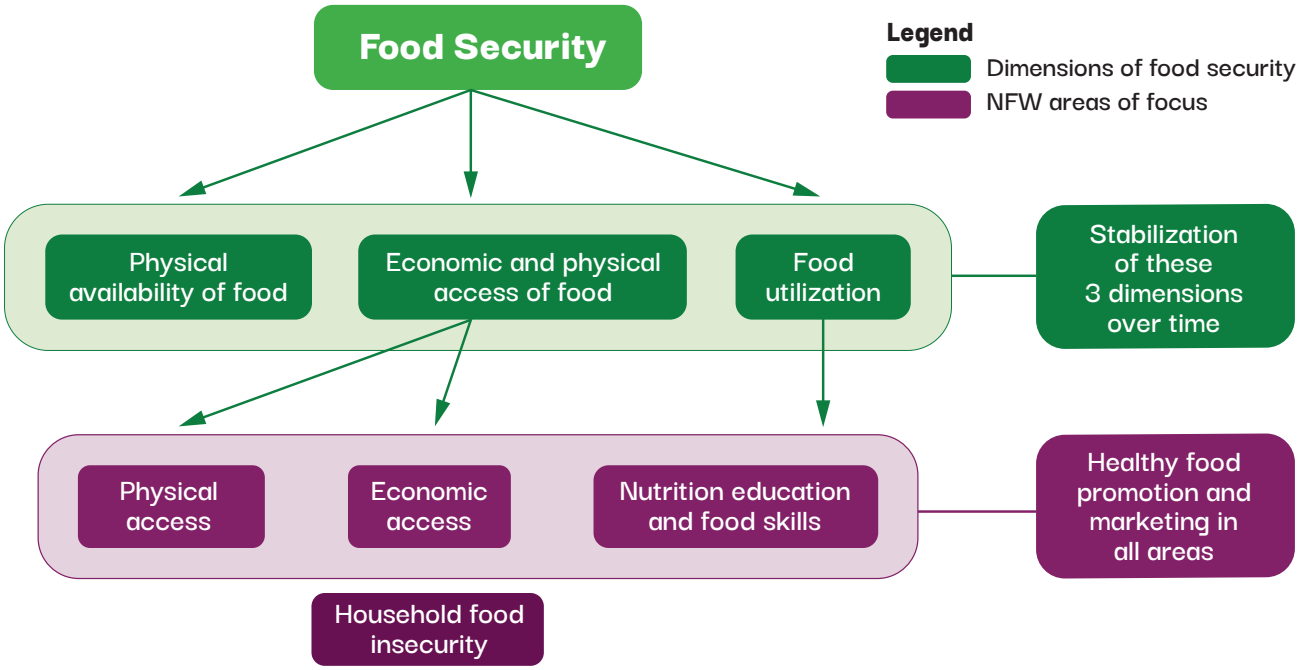

Figure 1: Linkages between the dimensions of food security, household food insecurity and the areas of focus of the Nutritious Foods Workstream (NFW).

Community-Driven Approach

The NFW includes a range of community partners representing social agencies, community groups, local government, academic researchers and healthcare system leaders to guide decision-making. Our Food Future has built a cross-sector network and assortment of round tables. These relationships increase accountability to the community and are leveraged to ensure various perspectives are included to guide the work.

Grounded in Research

Collaborators have conducted research to understand the local food system in Guelph-Wellington and identify gaps/opportunities for improvement. Asynchronous research was conducted looking at local food infrastructure, food access metrics, how food flows through Guelph-Wellington and activities to examine food equity and community resilience. Examples of local research include:

1. **Food Environment Assessment:** Completed between June of 2020 and September of 2021, this assessment serves as a snapshot of food access in Guelph-Wellington that brings together past research and local data to guide planning and decision-making. See Appendix A for the chapter entitled, "Overview: Key highlights and insights for action".
2. **Food Hub Study:** In collaboration with the Next Generation Manufacturing Canada (NGen), this study assesses the supports, facilities and other infrastructure needed to create an innovative circular agri-food system. This work includes a survey of the services and infrastructure in Wellington County that support food producers, as well as an assessment of whether there are adequate supports and facilities for the local agri-food industry.
3. **Food Waste Material Flow Study:** This research aggregated food waste data to create a picture of food and waste flows throughout the region that identified hotspots where food product is being lost. This research led to the Food Waste Material Flow Study Hotspots Interventions project.
4. **Data Hub and Mapping:** The Food Future Data Hub contains over 60 datasets related to Guelph-Wellington's local food environment, and dozens of applications including maps and data stories with insights on food access, food production and the food-related services provided by the municipality.

Funding Approaches

Various funding approaches have been used to fund small and large-scale community-led food access initiatives. Both traditional and collaborative funding approaches have been used, allowing opportunistic and timely projects to be funded. Alternative funding approaches are also being explored to capture the social and environment benefits of Our Food Future's food system work. Examples of funding approaches used to date include:

1. **Co-Lab Action and Funding Process:** Rather than applying for a particular funding amount, community groups brought ideas forward to state their intention to take part in the Co-Lab process, explored and built on the ideas, and decided as a group how best to allocate funding for food insecurity projects.
2. **Spark Grants Idea Generation Challenge:** Small-scale independent projects publicly socialized their ideas on Our Food Future's Kitchen Table platform. Short-listed ideas were then selected to develop complete proposals and select projects received a portion of the allocated funds.

3. **Strategic Collaborations:** Funding distributed to projects presented to the Nutritious Foods Workstream that align with the vision and serve as demonstration projects that were already vetted by community organizations.
4. **Harvest Impact Social Finance Fund:** This pooled community-lending utility is structured as a share capital cooperative that provides circular and social entrepreneurs access to grants, loans, awards, including non-repayable start-up capital to high-potential projects.
5. **Food Equity Stream:** Funding allocated to actions that arise from a local Food Equity and Community Resilience project that aims to understand how the food system presents barriers for underrepresented groups.
6. **Guelph-Wellington Urban Agriculture Challenge:** Funds distributed to projects that support circular economic recovery and accelerate food production, getting more food to the table with less environmental impact.
7. **Guelph-Wellington Community Agriculture Challenge:** Funds distributed to small scale community initiatives or equipment that promotes the growing and sharing of food.

In addition, several social enterprises focused on food relief have received funding through Our Food Future's Business workstream and the connected COIL (Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad) initiative, which is funded by the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario. This funding was aimed at helping accelerate the growth, technology adoption and long-term sustainability of these social enterprises.

See Appendix B to view a list of food access initiatives Our Food Future funded or helped garner funds for to date.

Photo Credit: Toque Ltd.

Success Stories

Food System Resiliency Table (The Table)

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many of the persistent challenges in the food system. In a matter of weeks, it exposed the underlying risks, fragilities, and inequities in global food systems and those shocks were felt here in Guelph-Wellington. One of the ways Our Food Future responded to the pandemic was mobilizing the Food System Resiliency Table (The Table). This regional food policy and programming working group brings together a cross section of community members to:

- Learn lessons from the pandemic and resist the attempt to return to business as usual;
- Continue with building and supporting a food system transformation that builds resilience at all levels;
- Ensure that diverse groups of people are leading from their lived experience and active in building a resilient food system for all; and to
- Support the transition to a circular food economy that is designed with equity, prosperity and sustainability at the core.

The Table is co-chaired by Our Food Future and the Guelph Community Health Centre. The Table includes 19 participants that are diverse in race, colour, sex, age, religion, socio-economic situation, culture, gender identity and expression, and ability. Since convening in late 2021, the Table has been meeting internally to build relationships and set the priorities for the next two years. The first open public meeting is scheduled for November 2022.

The first action identified by the Table is a commitment to revive and refresh the 2011 Guelph-Wellington Food Charter and Toolkit. This important document brought together over 150 community partners to rally around a shared vision for a better food system. The Table will be working to modernize the language of the Charter in alignment with the local vision of circularity and the UN Sustainable Development Goals while also creating a suite of digital tools that will make the information accessible to audiences. The first funded action identified by the Table is an arts-based initiative in partnership with a community artist to tell the story of the rich history of the food system in an accessible and inspiring way. This artistic expression will support decolonizing the ways stories are recorded and offer a forum to raise awareness about our collective histories. Future actions emerging in 2023 will include community engagement and strategic planning to integrate food system visioning and policy work into both City and County Councils.

Food Equity with Dignity (FEWD)

Community FEWD is setting up pop-up food stands on a regular basis to provide delicious and nutritious hot take away meals to communities in Guelph that have been identified as food insecure. The operation takes high-quality food items destined for landfill and transforms them into restaurant quality meals. To date Community FEWD is servicing the following neighbourhoods: North Riverside (North End Harvest Market), Two Rivers, Brant Ave, Grange Hill East, Onward Willow, Parkwood Gardens (beginning September).

Between May 11th - Aug 31st, this operation has served 4,000 meals, diverted 1,800 Kgs from landfill, generated $2,350 in donations and provided 1,000 volunteer work hours. Community FEWD offers catering as a way to bring revenue into the program, as well as showcase the quality of foods that can be produced while challenging associated stigmas. Since starting in May, Catering has brought in $6,000 in revenue and diverted 180 Kgs of landfill. Catering clients included: 10C, The Arrell Food Institute, Guelph Family Health Study, OPIRG, Smart Cities and Re:Purpose Fest.

Groceries from The SEED

The SEED launched Groceries from The SEED, a pay-what-you-choose online grocery store with a social purpose. Residents can sign up as members and then do their regular grocery shopping online through The SEED, paying the full retail price. The profit from these purchases goes to subsidize substantial discounts for community residents in need. With funding from COIL, The SEED was also able to make their delivery service zero waste and pilot new technologies like smart delivery bins that could help make their service even more secure and effective in lower income communities.

From April 1, 2021 to March 21, 2022 (first year of operation):

- Over 10,000 deliveries made (approximately 80% of these deliveries were made to households facing food insecurity)
- Over $500,000 in savings among people paying discounted rates
- Over 10,000 meals produced in The SEED's Upcycle Kitchen (a different social enterprise) were sold or given away for free to customers
- Over $10,000 in free food delivered to the homes of customers

Since joining Groceries from The SEED, customers noted:

- Improved mental health (57%)
- Improved physical health (54%)
- Improved family health (35%)
- Improved general health (62%)

Guelph Food Bank Hub and Spoke Collaborative Pilot Project

Guelph Food Bank (GFB) formalized its 'Community Food Hub' vision by working closely with three initial community groups (Grange Hill East NG, Two Rivers NG, and West Willow Village NG) to begin a decentralization of its client servicing programming. The goal of the project, and the organizations' eventual goal realization, is to bring consistent emergency food support closer to where clients live while opening the door for tailored-to-the-neighbourhood wrap-around support later on.

From February 2022 to the end of June 2022 (First 5-month pilot):

- 47% increase in the unique number of individuals being served under the GFB umbrella
- 62% increase in the average amount of food (lbs) being distributed by the GFB per month
- 132% increase in the number of items (variety) being made available by the GFB to partner satellite agencies
- 724% increase in the amount of food (lbs) being distributed by the GFB directly to partner satellite agencies

During the initial pilot project, program participants surveyed indicated:

- Increased access to affordable nutritious foods (84.5%)
- Matched satellite locations were easier to get to from where they live than the GFB (93.9%)
- Overall, it is beneficial to be able to access food supports at their matched satellite rather than the GFB (89.9%)

Identifying Strategic Priorities

In June of 2022, key partners gathered in facilitated meetings to prioritize actions that will contribute to the goal of food security. Members of Our Food Future's Business and Waste Workstreams were also in attendance. During these meetings partners discussed opportunities with momentum and synergy that could be priorities over the next three years.

Through this process, six strategic priorities for future food access initiatives emerged:

1. **Food Access and Healthcare:** Increased distribution and utility of healthy food prescriptions and vouchers by health and social service agencies.
2. **Local Food Infrastructure:** Increased food infrastructure for food storage, processing, distribution and community building.
3. **Building a Circular Food Movement:** Increased awareness about the importance, value and right to healthy food for everyone.
4. **Integrated Funding Strategy:** Coordinated funding strategy that results in reliable funding sources for local food system work to support service delivery and service innovation.
5. **Community Food Growing Strategy:** Increased public land used for food growing and retail opportunities for growers.
6. **Regenerative Agriculture:** Increased regenerative practices used in food production, with greater understanding of the value of these ecosystem services.

The next section describes each strategic priority, providing additional context and proposed next steps for implementation. In combination, the Nutritious Foods Workstream believes these strategic priorities can contribute to achieving food security for everyone in the community and set the collective direction for collaborative workstream efforts moving forward.

Strategic Priority #1: Food Access & Healthcare

Background

Nutrition plays a major role in growth and development, mental health, and preventing lifestyle-related chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and osteoporosis.[3,4,5,6] An unhealthy diet is now the leading behavioural risk factor for death in Canada and 72% of adults in Ontario consume inadequate amounts of fruits and vegetables.[6,7] The modernization of the food system and growing number of large-scale retail outlets and fast-food outlets have had a significant impact on food availability, affordability and quality.[8] Consumers now have easier access to cheap, high calorie, nutrient poor foods and beverages. The 2015 Canadian Community Health Survey suggested that Canadians are consuming almost half of their daily energy from ultra-processed foods (e.g., burgers, pizza, cookies, etc.).[9] For the Ontario healthcare system, unhealthy eating accounts for $5.6 billion direct and indirect healthcare costs, the second highest healthcare cost next to tobacco.[7] Access to healthy food is foundational for health and well-being, yet many community members are not able to afford healthy food and the pandemic has created additional financial hardships.

In 2020, the Nutritious Foods Workstream surveyed a representative sample of 600 Guelph-Wellington residents asking questions about their experiences with food insecurity. This community survey found 1 in 8 (12%) Guelph-Wellington households are food insecure and almost two-thirds (63%) of them reported this was a new experience since the pandemic began.[9,10] Adults living in food insecure households are more likely to suffer from chronic diseases, yet food insecurity makes it difficult to manage existing health conditions because of the inability to afford healthy food or prescription medication.[2,9] Research shows that severe food insecurity has major impacts on a child's wellbeing including being at higher risk for asthma, depression, and suicidal ideation in adolescence and early adulthood.[2,11]

According to Canadian research completed in 2021, the highest risk groups for food insecurity include households who have low incomes and limited assets, are led by female lone parents, are reliant on public income supports or are indigenous or other racial or cultural groups (Figure 2).[2]

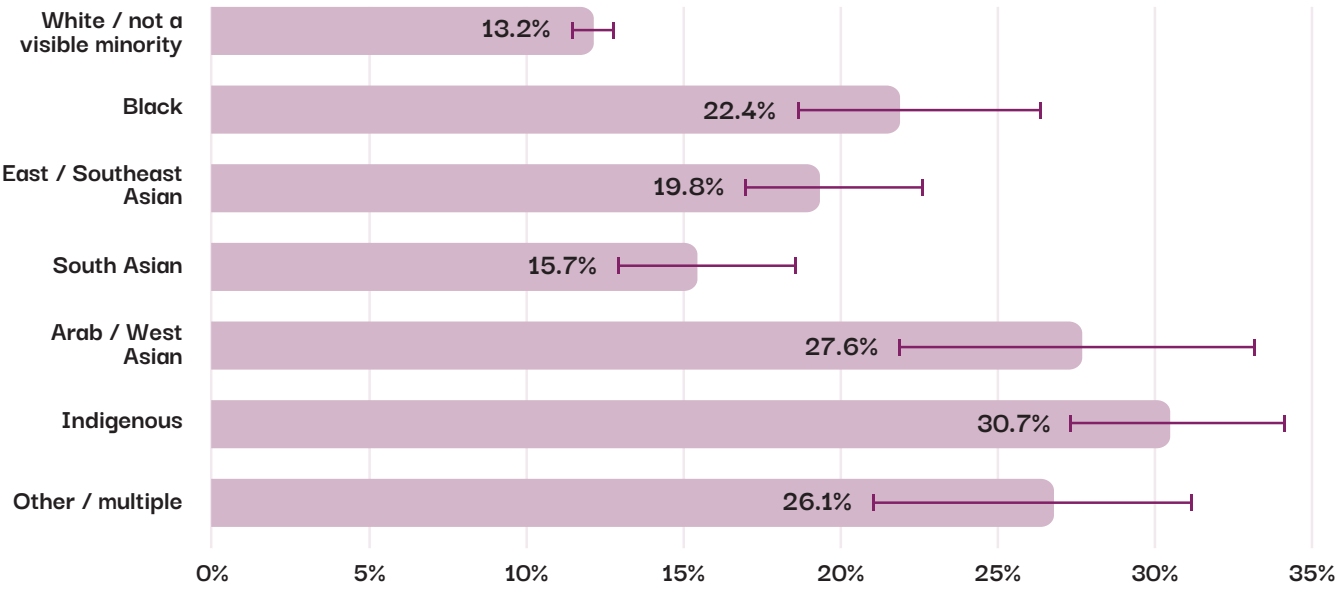

Figure 2: Percentage of individuals living in food-insecure households by racial or cultural identity & Indigenous status, 2022.

The Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) is a survey tool used to monitor food affordability and the cost to eat healthy. The analysis shows the cost of a healthy food basket compared to individual/family income scenarios. In 2018, the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph for a reference family of four was $210.09 per week.[12] Between 2009 to 2018, the cost of the NFB has increased 27% which disproportionately impacts low-income households.[12] The results of the 2022 NFB collection will be released in late 2022 and will aid in understanding how the pandemic and inflation has impacted food affordability.

Although many residents cannot afford food, fewer than 25% of food insecure households access emergency food provision services due to various barriers. Efforts to expand reach and services that offer individuals greater autonomy may be beneficial.[9] Primary care (and other social service agencies) have a large reach in the community and could play a foundational role in helping to screen for food insecurity, identify people at risk, and increase access to healthy foods for residents who cannot afford it.

While expanding food access programming is important to meet immediate needs, these programs do not address the root causes of food insecurity. To alleviate financial constraints, income-based solutions such as guaranteed basic income, higher social assistance rates, and reduced precarious employment conditions are required. [9,11] Although regional food access programming may not be an effective solution for food insecurity, these programs are critical for assisting with immediate needs to accessing food while striving for upstream system change.

In November 2021 the City of Guelph joined the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP), an international agreement of mayors aimed at tackling food systems and sustainability issues in urban/peri-urban settings.[13] The Pact includes 37 recommendations for action, below are two examples that demonstrate opportunities for health and social service agencies to improve food access:[14]

12. Encourage joint action by health and food sectors to implement integrated people-centred strategies for healthy lifestyles and social inclusion.

14. Use cash and food transfers, and other forms of social protection systems (food banks, community food kitchens, emergency food pantries etc.) to provide vulnerable populations with access to healthy food, while taking into consideration the specific beliefs, culture, traditions, dietary habits and preferences of diverse communities, as a matter of human dignity and to avoid further marginalization.

Connections to Our Food Future's food access initiatives:

- Medicine Bundles Nimide Wayan project
- Farmers Market Refresh
- Onward Willow Co-Design Project
- Groceries from The SEED
- Emergency Food Home Delivery program
- Local Food Procurement for Non-Profit Programming

Proposed Action

An initial priority to improve food access through the healthcare system is to establish a regional coordinated healthy food prescription program (e.g., Fresh Food Rx*). Various agencies would provide prescriptions for fresh food to Guelph-Wellington residents who are not able to afford food. Food insecure households would then be able to use these prescriptions to obtain healthy food and access other supports to assist with preparing and consuming healthy meals.

Similar to food prescribing, voucher programs (e.g., Market Bucks*) are available in communities to provide subsidized food purchasing options. Primary care (and other social service agencies) may be well positioned to distribute "market bucks" in Guelph-Wellington. While scaling up a regional food prescription program, additional opportunities for the healthcare sector to enable access to nutritious foods will be identified (e.g., procurement policies for healthy food).

Outcome Statement

Increased distribution and utility of healthy food prescriptions and vouchers by health and social service agencies.

Phases of Implementation Example

Phase 1: Assess	Phase 2: Plan	Phase 3: Implement
Assess expansion of the current Fresh Food Rx program operating in the City of Guelph to identify potential reach and expansion risks. Assess how a "Market Bucks" program could be expanded in Wellington County and introduced to the Guelph Farmers Market (in alignment with the Fresh Food Rx program). For the University of Guelph PHAC Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund Co-Design Project, co-design similar prescription/voucher actions for Onward Willow neighbourhood. Assess need/opportunities for procurement of nutritious foods in public institutions (e.g., hospitals, childcare centres, etc.).	Develop a plan to establish a regional Fresh Food Rx program. Plan and pilot a Market Bucks program at Guelph Farmers Market. Develop an implementation plan from the actions identified through the co-design work in Onward Willow neighbourhood. Apply for phase two of PHAC Health Canadians and Communities Fund implementation grant.	Pilot and evaluate a regional Fresh Food Rx program. Sustain and scale up successful approaches for Fresh Food Rx and Market Bucks type program in Guelph-Wellington. Pilot test actions in Onward Willow neighbourhood.

*Fresh Food Rx: Doctors and healthcare practitioners prescribe fresh food to community members who need it for their health and prescriptions are redeemable at Groceries from The SEED.
*Market Bucks: Partnership program between the County of Wellington and local Farmer's Markets where giftcards are issued as "vouchers" to purchase food.

Strategic Priority #2: Local Food Infrastructure

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted global food supply chains and raised questions about regional food system resiliency. Location of production, sustainability and self-reliance are major factors for consideration when comparing regional food systems and global food systems.[15] The climate crisis has also highlighted that global supply chains are vulnerable and there could be a need for investment in local cold storage, processing, and distribution channels. Food hubs are dedicated, locally driven infrastructure designed to increase the viability of the regional food system.[15] Potential benefits of establishing a food hub include increased local food production, greater access to local foods and increased economic development opportunities. For example, food hubs can increase market access for small and mid-sized businesses.[15]

Investment in local food infrastructure, such as food hubs, can benefit the emergency food provision system which services food-insecure populations. The current emergency food provision system (e.g., food banks, sliding scale markets, etc.) functions separately from the mainstream food system (e.g., grocery stores, farmer's markets, etc.). Despite the volume of food being moved, the emergency food provision system encounters challenges. Organizations often duplicate effort, infrastructure, staffing, food procurement and waste diversion efforts. Thirty-nine food access programs operate in Guelph-Wellington, yet only 25% of food insecure households access these services due to various barriers (e.g., transportation, food variety, hours of operation, etc.).[9,10] Food pantries are more vulnerable to supply changes and may not be able to offer a variety of nutritious or culturally relevant foods – particularly vegetables, fruit, and other fresh items.[9] A food hub model could help ensure a variety of foods that meet community needs are available and distributed to food access programs for wholesale pricing.

Certain neighbourhoods and townships in Guelph-Wellington have minimal access to nutritious food, while other areas are saturated with opportunities to purchase less nutritious options.[9] Many of the emergency food providers in Guelph-Wellington network to ensure there are multiple points of entry for residents with immediate needs. For example, the Guelph Food Bank recently transitioned to a decentralized model, acting as a central point for food collection and distribution to partner agencies that serve within neighbourhoods. In the County, transportation to and from food outlets is a prevalent barrier.[16] The SEED's program Groceries from The SEED offers delivery services in Guelph and Centre Wellington, trying to bring food closer to where people are located. A food hub model could help expand reach of emergency food provision services while also increasing the presence of local nutritious foods for everyone in the region.

Local food hubs as food distribution epicentres can create stronger connections between consumers and farmers, greater climate resilience, fewer transportation miles, and more processing options for producers. The SEED currently operates a warehouse site that has been a test bed, providing a business case that demonstrates the benefits of coordinated distribution and the need for an expanded food hub in Guelph-Wellington.

In November 2021 the City of Guelph joined the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP), an international agreement of mayors aimed at tackling food systems and sustainability issues in urban/peri-urban settings.[13] The Pact includes 37 recommendations for action, below are two examples that support enhancing food infrastructure to improve food access:[14]

28. Support improved food storage, processing, transport and distribution technologies and infrastructure linking peri-urban and near rural areas to ensure seasonal food consumption and reduce food insecurity as well as food and nutrient loss and waste with an emphasis on diversified small and medium scale food businesses along the value chain that may provide decent and stable employment.

32. Improve and expand support for infrastructure related to market systems that link urban buyers to urban, peri-urban and rural sellers while also building social cohesion and trust, supporting cultural exchange and ensuring sustainable livelihood, especially for women and young entrepreneurs.

Connections to Our Food Future's food access initiatives:

- Hub and Spoke Collaborative Pilot Project and Expansion
- Groceries form The SEED
- Emergency Food Home Delivery program
- Two Rivers Neighbourhood Group Community Market
- Local Food Procurement for Non-Profit Programming
- Making the University of Guelph Campus a Hub for Food Initiatives
- Kitchen Connection

Proposed Action

In follow-up to Guelph-Wellington's Food Hub Study, there is an opportunity to plan and implement food hub(s) that are integrated within the commercial sector. Depending on the strategy taken, this vision could require a significant capital investment and take time to fully realize. While the vision and financing for a centralized facility is being pursued, the community could leverage existing infrastructure in a hub and spoke strategy to support a variety of pick-up and distribution locations (e.g., Guelph's Farmer's Market*, recreation centres, farmers' fields, local processors, etc.). The hubs would increase local food distribution (i.e., local farmers in the consumer market), increase the capacity of emergency food providers, and create shorter supply chains.

Outcome Statement

Increased food infrastructure for food storage, processing, distribution and community building.

Phases of Implementation Example

Phase 1: Assess	Phase 2: Plan	Phase 3: Implement
Building off Guelph-Wellington's Food Hub study, identify contextual barriers and quantify benefits of moving food hub plans into practice. Identify local assets for potential use in hub-and-spoke strategy (i.e., satellite distribution locations) and market gaps (e.g., lack of cold storage or co-packing facilities). Define business case and identify key partners and role of partners in defining components of hub, operating satellite locations and locating central facility.	Advocate for the importance/value of food hubs to local municipalities. Plan logistics of satellite pick-up and distribution locations (e.g., farms, processors, farmer's markets, rec centres, etc.). Launch capital campaign/ fundraise funds for a central facility. Plan development of central facility.	Operate and evaluate satellite pick-up and distribution locations. Launch central facility.

*Guelph's Farmer's Market: Now managed by 10 Carden Shared Space, the farmer's market brings together local farmers and vendors.

Strategic Priority #3: Building a Circular Food Movement

Background

It is becoming increasingly clear that environmental, social and economic sustainability objectives cannot be viewed in silos. Social issues of inequality and environmental issues of climate change, overconsumption of resources and waste generation must be addressed holistically.[17] From the conception of Our Food Future, the initiative recognized that issues of food access and equity must be centred in the regional transition to the circular food economy alongside environmental and economic drivers.

Through research and listening to the community, Our Food Future learned there is an opportunity to spark conversations and understanding about the food issues experienced in Guelph-Wellington to create a more supportive food environment. For example, many people in Guelph-Wellington may not be aware of how far-reaching experiences of food insecurity can truly be and systemic inequities that perpetuate financial constraints. Research conducted in Centre Wellington raised a key question about how to de-stigmatize access to food in response to the many comments participants shared about experiencing stigma and stigma being a barrier to accessing services.[16] In addition, without realizing the connection between racism, oppression, and food insecurity, any actions taken to increase access to nutritious foods could increase inequities.[9]

In Canada, almost 60% of all food that is produced is lost and wasted annually.[18] As part of Our Food Future's Food Waste Material Flow Study, household food purchasing patterns in Guelph-Wellington were estimated using food availability, expenditures, and price indexes from 2018. According to the study, households in Guelph-Wellington buy about 83.5 kilotons of food every year from retail food outlets (excluding restaurants).[9,18] Out of all of the food being wasted in Guelph-Wellington, about 1/3 comes from consumer food waste.[18] Households throw away 25% of the edible food they buy from retail food outlets – namely fruits, vegetables, grains and planted-based protein.[9] This suggests there could be barriers in the home that lead people to throw away nutritious foods, such as not knowing how to prepare certain foods, improper storage, lack of planning, etc.[9]

Our Food Future conducted a Motivations Survey of residents in Guelph-Wellington to better understand what motivates them to live a more sustainable lifestyle, including a focus on food. Surveying is complete and Our Food Future is launching the Reimagine Food Campaign which will be a series of events, conversations and engagements to help Guelph-Wellington create a new narrative about the future of our food system and raise awareness about the right to healthy food for everyone. Reimagine Food is Our Food Future's public relations and community engagement campaign to inspire a circular food economy movement. By working with businesses, governments, community groups, and individuals the campaign will inspire and empower people to learn about how circular theory comes to life, engage in lively conversations about food system transformation, build demand for circular products, take pride in the local food culture, and develop new ways of valuing food while wasting less.

In November 2021 the City of Guelph joined the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP), an international agreement of mayors aimed at tackling food systems and sustainability issues in urban/peri-urban settings.[13] The Pact includes 37 recommendations for action, below are two examples that support enhancing public awareness and interest in food access:[14]

17. Encourage and support social and solidarity economy activities, paying special attention to food related activities that support sustainable livelihoods for marginalized populations at different levels of the food chain and facilitate access to safe and healthy foods in both urban and rural areas.

19. Promote participatory education, training and research as key elements in strengthening local action to increase social and economic equity, promote rights-based approaches, alleviate poverty and facilitate access to adequate and nutritious foods.

Connections to Our Food Future's food access initiatives:

- Food Equity with Dignity (FEWD) project
- Upcycle kitchen
- Farmers Market Refresh
- Groceries from The Seed
- Guelph Film Festival Tiny Food Docs
- Making the University of Guelph Campus a Hub for Food Initiatives
- Community Builders Lunch & Learn
- Food Equity and Community Resilience Events
- Food System Resiliency Table

Proposed Action

The circular food movement will build upon the momentum generated by Our Food Future's Reimagine Food Campaign, Food Equity and Community Resilience events, and the work of the Food System Resiliency Table. These initiatives already have connections into many organizations such as schools, libraries, businesses, and communities. To continue the momentum, partners could seek opportunities for culture change in the food system that would increase awareness about food system issues, support collaborative food access organizations, facilitate individuals with lived experience to lead system change, and encourage a culture of community care.

For example, neighbourhood-based food gatherings could be organized across Guelph-Wellington to celebrate the circular food movement with free food for everyone, eliminating barriers to access. Organizers would provide a framework/toolkit to make it easier for community members to get involved and organize events such as mobile food trucks, picnics, streetside meals, etc. Food procurement for ingredients could come from local farmers and events could be encouraged to be zero waste (e.g., Second Harvest could be brought in to support food reclamation). Eventually the goal would be to have a highly visible series of neighbourhood-based food gatherings serving over 250,000 meals across Guelph-Wellington, centered on the notion of Care, Community and

Connection. In addition, 10C's revamping of the Guelph Farmers Market is an opportunity for place-based programming, skill-development, and knowledge sharing related to building a circular food movement in Guelph-Wellington.

Outcome Statement

Increased awareness about the importance, value and right to healthy food for everyone.

Phases of Implementation Example

Phase 1: Assess	Phase 2: Plan	Phase 3: Implement
Define the "circular food movement" and align it with the engagement activities and communications plan of the Reimagine Food Campaign. Re-align the approach with the learning from the Food Equity & Community Resilience Events. Plan an event to pilot neighbourhood-based food gatherings in strategic locations. Support Food System Resiliency Table and update Guelph-Wellington Food Charter based on community feedback sessions. Seek sponsorship to continue the Reimagine Food Campaign. Share learnings from Motivations Survey.	Develop a communication strategy to raise awareness about the importance of the circular food movement. Implement neighbourhood-based food event(s) and assess scalability. Succession planning for Food System Resiliency Table. Food Equity & Community Resilience Momentum projects implemented. Implement pilot projects based on the Motivations Survey to encourage residents to live more sustainably.	Implement the communication strategy to raise awareness/profile of neighbourhood-based food events and the circular food movement. Implement and evaluate a neighbourhood-based food events. Evaluate results of Motivations pilot projects.

Strategic Priority #4: Integrated Funding

Background

During the COVID-19 pandemic there was a change in demand for emergency food provision services.[9,10] Of the agencies surveyed, 42% reported an increase in demand and increase in new clients.[10] Service providers also reported it was challenging to find financial support for programming and many providers shifted their service model to make their funding stretch further during unprecedented times.[10] At the moment, there is no integrated and sustainable funding stream (at any level of government) for food system work. Many local health and social service agencies must apply for funding to establish or maintain food-related programming. A lot of organizational capacity is spent on applying for small-scale grants and very few large-scale grants are awarded.

While emergency food provision services bear the burden of regularly 'rescuing' food from retail sources, funding to do so often requires competing against other similar agencies. Receiving a sustainable funding source is especially challenging, causing many agencies to run short-term pilot programs. Although the projects may demonstrate positive outcomes and show promise, the current funding models do not support long-term implementation of projects. Second Harvest reports that there are 61,000 non-profits in Canada providing food to Canadians and there are four times more food charities compared to grocery stores across the country.[19] In 2020, a shocking 33 billion dollars is the value of food provided by charities to people in Canada.[19]

Providing dedicated resources for food system work makes a difference. Initiatives with fewer direct links to municipal government and more tenuous funding struggle more with effectiveness than those with more direct links and supports.[20] Municipalities that allocate dedicated staff time, engage the community in creating strategies and adequately resource those strategies have demonstrated significant impact. For example, the City of Toronto allocated resources to create the Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC) in 1991.[21] The TFPC has successfully connected diverse people from various sectors including food, farming and community to develop effective policies and projects that work towards the creation of a health focused food system and a platform for action.[21] Between 1991 and 1998, the Toronto Food Policy Council, funded by the city at the rate of approximately $220,000 a year, helped raise more than $7 million dollars from other sources for community food projects.[20] Since 2010, the Toronto Food Strategy has been able to attract funding from charitable foundations and the provincial government for multiple initiatives. The TFPC has been recognized internationally and made huge contributions to a variety of food policy initiatives.[21] Another example is the City of Vancouver. The Vancouver Food Policy Council was created in 2003 in response to municipal council calling for a just and sustainable food system.[22] Since then, Vancouver City Council and the Vancouver Park Board have worked together to set individual food policies, programs, and grants that have flourished. A few milestones include the creation of the Vancouver Food Charter (2007), grants to support neighbourhood food networks (2009-2012) and a call for coordinated food strategy (2020).[22] The City of Vancouver recently brokered a deal with the Vancouver Foundation to fund green initiatives, including projects that increase the supply of local food, in part inspired by the work of the Vancouver Food Policy Council. The City pays for one half of each new initiative and the foundation pays for the other half.[20]

Guelph-Wellington's Food System Resiliency Table is laying the groundwork for a regionally focused food policy council that aims to harmonize a vision for a circular food economy in both City and County Councils. Currently, this includes the modernizing of the 2011 Guelph-Wellington Food Charter and Toolkit and the planning of open public meetings to garner community input for food system visioning, advocacy and policy proposals. These critical conversations are being organized while strategic planning and funding is being sourced.

In November 2021 the City of Guelph joined the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP), an international agreement of mayors aimed at tackling food systems and sustainability issues in urban/peri-urban settings.[13] The Pact includes 37 recommendations for action, below are two examples that support the need for integrated funding/resources for food-related work:[14]

1. Facilitate collaboration across city agencies and departments and seek alignment of policies and programmes that impact the food system across multiple sectors and administrative levels, adopting and mainstreaming a rights-based approach; options can include dedication of permanent city staff, review of tasks and procedures and reallocation of resources.

4. Develop or revise urban food policies and plans and ensure allocation of appropriate resources within city administration regarding food-related policies and programmes; review, harmonize and strengthen municipal regulations; build up strategic capacities for a more sustainable, healthy and equitable food system balancing urban and rural interests.

Connections to Our Food Future's food access initiatives:

Our Food Future has provided both a platform and funding to support the increased coordination of regional food system actors towards a shared vision. Through the Nutritious Food Workstream, a cross-sectoral table of collaborators has increased opportunities for efficiency, sharing of resources, joint programming and the testing and development of new innovations. In addition, through coordination with collaborators across the broader initiative, opportunities for supporting joint outreach and coordinated funding applications has resulted in leveraging over $15 million in additional funds. As the current funding for the Our Food Future Initiative comes to an end in December 2023, there are opportunities to coordinate and integrate programmatic, policy and funding advocacy activities aimed at all three levels of government in support of the Action Plan.

Proposed Action

Create an integrated funding plan and advocacy strategy to support the Action Plan and future food system work in the region. This includes coordinating funding applications and designing a range of short-term and long-term funding streams (e.g., private sector outreach, municipal budgets, taxes, capital campaigns, social finance, etc.) that contribute to a sustainable funding model. The ultimate goal would be to secure sustainable long-term funding source(s) for food-related work that is coordinated regionally across local governments in collaboration with agencies and food system collaborators.

Outcome Statement

Coordinated funding strategy that results in reliable funding sources for local food system work to support both service delivery and system innovation.

Phases of Implementation Example

Phase 1: Assess	Phase 2: Plan	Phase 3: Implement
Bring key partners together to identify where there are opportunities to collaboratively apply for short-term funding. Investigate other funding opportunities for long-term financing/investment in local food work (i.e., federal/ provincial governments, health care system private sector). Investigate potential funding streams within municipal powers that could be diverted to support local food-work (e.g., Community Benefit Agreements, municipal service fees or levies or procurement policies, etc.).	Reduce burden on individual organizations by creating a collaborative system to routinely apply for funding that benefits the ecosystem in lieu of a sustainable model. Create a business case identifying the benefits and need for local investment in food-work that links to relevant measurement frameworks (i.e., Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, Guelph-Wellington Food System Resiliency Table, Guelph Wellington Food Charter). Community workstream participants consider strategies to advocate and educate the public and municipal councils about what's possible/what's necessary for establishing a food-work budget. Work with collaborators across province and country to advocate for sustainable funding from other levels of government.	Establish a funding network for key partners interested in routinely applying for collaborative funding opportunities. Pursue pilots of new sustainable funding sources with public, private and/or foundational partners. Secure private investments for food-related work.

Strategic Priority #5: Community Food Growing Strategy

Background

Community agriculture is the practice of growing vegetables, fruit, herbs, flowers, and livestock by a community or to be shared with a community.[9] Community and pollinator gardens, community farms, and food forests are all examples of community agriculture. Participants learn and practice growing food while gaining a better understanding of the food system. Participating in community agriculture can provide health, social and environmental benefits such as[9]:

- Encouraging physical activity for all age groups and abilities
- Promoting mental health and wellness
- Creating a safe, welcoming space for social gathering
- Creating opportunities for teaching, learning and employment
- Preserving and expanding green space by encouraging environmental stewardship

Community agriculture may be especially beneficial to people who have recently immigrated to Canada by providing an opportunity to grow familiar foods and foster a sense of community and cultural identity.[9] Centre Wellington Community Foundation conducted a focus group comprised of newcomers including 15 Syrian refugees.[16] From the focus group they found that the newcomers wanted to garden but lacked knowledge on how to garden in a Canadian context (e.g., navigating Canadian soil, seeds, fertilization, watering routines, etc.).[16] This research demonstrates there are community groups interested in growing food that lack land, knowledge and supports to do so.

The Nutritious Foods Workstream's Food Environment Assessment identified 57 community agriculture spaces currently operating in Guelph-Wellington, only 8 (14%) of which are in Wellington County.[9] There is an opportunity to establish a network of gardeners who can work with local municipalities to identify where land is available (e.g., parks, community organizations, outdoor spaces at workplaces or supported housing complexes), identify neighbourhoods that need supports, obtain growing permissions, and develop community growing strategies. The strategy could also examine equitable distribution of growing opportunities in the region to inform community agriculture investment decisions.

While developing a community growing strategy it is important to understand the role community agriculture plays in increasing access to nutritious foods. In some cases, food grown through community agriculture is donated to emergency food provision services or given to community members experiencing food insecurity.[9] Harvests from community agriculture introduce limited amounts of food into the emergency food provision system and do not address the root causes of food insecurity. To alleviate financial constraints, income-based solutions such as guaranteed basic income, higher social assistance rates, and reduced precarious employment conditions are required.[9,11] Although a growing strategy may not be an effective solution for food insecurity, there are many health, social and environmental benefits for participants and the local economy.[9]

In November 2021 the City of Guelph joined the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP), an international agreement of mayors aimed at tackling food systems and sustainability issues in urban/peri-urban settings.[13] The Pact includes 37 recommendations for action, below are two examples that demonstrate how community food growing can contribute to food security:[14]

20. Promote and strengthen urban and peri-urban food production and processing based on sustainable approaches and integrate urban and peri-urban agriculture into city resilience plans.

23. Protect and enable secure access and tenure to land for sustainable food production in urban and peri-urban areas, including land for community gardeners and smallholder producers, for example through land banks or community land trusts; provide access to municipal land for local agricultural production and promote integration with land use and city development plans and programmes.

Connections to Our Food Future's food access initiatives:

- 18 urban agriculture projects funded by Our Food Future
- Food from Home = Food for Home project
- Medicine Bundles
- Cultural Meals Social Enterprise project
- Kids Get Growing
- Junction Food Network
- Wellington North-Growing Healthy Rural Communities
- Collaborative Learning Community from Seed to Plate in the Town of Erin

Proposed Action

Develop a Community Food Growing Strategy in Guelph-Wellington that explores use of public land for growing (e.g., edible landscapes), allows for food growing on a small-medium scale in non-agricultural areas, and identifies retail opportunities for growers (e.g., farm incubators).

Outcome Statement

Increased public land used for food growing and retail opportunities for growers.

Phases of Implementation Example

Phase 1: Assess	Phase 2: Plan	Phase 3: Implement
Identify who in the community wants access to land to grow food. Identify land in Guelph-Wellington that could potentially be available for public growing by using GIS mapping. Explore models for types of land access. Collective land ownership or community managed greenhouses. Define food growing as core infrastructure and showcase practical growing methods (e.g., demonstration projects like rooftop gardens, public planters, etc.). Explore social enterprise and business opportunities with food grown on public land (e.g., market gardens and peri-urban agriculture, farm incubators, edible landscapes, etc.).	Obtain approval to use public land for growing in desired areas. Develop a plan to link interested growers to available land and support them with small-medium scale growing. Develop a plan to link growers that use public lands to retail opportunities (e.g., social enterprises and businesses). Collect content, resources, to support knowledge of regenerative growing. List/communicate existing resources for supplies and learning (e.g. seed libraries, tool library).	Implement and evaluate public growing programs identified in phase 2. Launch Regen Ag Community Growing pilot (looking at growing strategy for non-agricultural context and showing how we can apply regen practices).

Strategic Priority #6: Regenerative Agriculture

Background

Agricultural systems in our food supply chain have evolved to become a global contributor to climate change through greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, biodiversity loss, and land use change.[23] Large scale farming is often dependent on petrochemicals, relying on supplements to increase yields. The demand of a growing population in turn increases use of extractive resources and land use change, further amplifying the negative impact on our environment.[24]

However, farming itself can be the key to reversing this damage. Through a shift in practices, farmland can restore health to soils, which then act like a sponge for absorbing greenhouse gases. Regenerative Agriculture is a suite of recognized practices for producing food that aims to have low—and even net positive—environmental impacts.[25]

The County of Wellington is a large and thriving agricultural community, with over 2,600 farms. Wellington's **Future Focused Climate Change Mitigation Plan**[26] recognizes agricultural activity as a source of emissions, and also identifies the work of local projects like Our Food Future as essential supports for improvement.

Following an environmental scan and gap analysis of existing supports for regenerative agriculture practices[27], Our Food Future worked with Arrell Food Institute scholars to design a pilot. The Experimental Acres Regenerative Agriculture Pilot provides an on-ramp to climate friendly farming practices and soil health assessment. It opened applications in Fall 2021 and currently has fifteen participants in both Wellington and Dufferin Counties. Year two of the pilot will be expanded to include Grey County, as the project continues to scale and assess the municipal role in supporting climate friendly farming.

In November 2021 the City of Guelph joined the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP), an international agreement of mayors aimed at tackling food systems and sustainability issues in urban/peri-urban settings.[13] The Pact includes 37 recommendations for action, below are two examples that support regenerative agriculture practices:[14]

20. Promote and strengthen urban and peri-urban food production and processing based on sustainable approaches and integrate urban and peri-urban agriculture into city resilience plans.

22. Apply an ecosystem approach to guide holistic and integrated land use planning and management in collaboration with both urban and rural authorities and other natural resource managers by combining landscape features, for example with risk-minimizing strategies to enhance opportunities for agroecological production, conservation of biodiversity and farmland, climate change adaptation, tourism, leisure and other ecosystem services.

Connections to Our Food Future's food access initiatives:

- 18 urban agriculture projects funded by Our Food Future
- Food from Home = Food for Home project
- Cultural Meals Social Enterprise project
- Kids Get Growing
- Junction Food Network
- Wellington North-Growing Healthy Rural Communities
- Collaborative Learning Community from Seed to Plate in the Town of Erin

Proposed Action

Encourage regenerative farming practices, build soil quality, prepare for climate-stress resiliency, and reward best practices through a mechanism which values ecosystem services and circularity. To achieve scale in this system shift, several projects are needed:

- **Circular Foodshed Matrix:** The environmental value of climate friendly farming could be recognized through an incentive and visibility system which ladders with increased actions. This system should be designed to contribute to local circularity by honoring the value-transfer relationships between farms, businesses, and organizations practicing social good.
- **Multiple Place-Based Actions:** Our Food Future is working with producer organizations and associations to draft a plan for a Living Lab project in Southern Ontario. This coordinated approach will confirm whether the recommended best practices achieve good results in various places and farming types. A unified method for gathering data and communicating results will speed uptake of practice shifts.
- **Adaptation Roadmap for Resiliency:** The work of the Food Waste Flow, Datahub, and Food Hub Study have demonstrated how the food value chain functions in Guelph-Wellington. Next, a climate adaptation lens should be applied to understand where there are areas of vulnerability. From this survey, a roadmap to prioritize preventative actions should be developed.

Outcome Statement

Increased regenerative practices used in food production, with greater understanding of the value of these ecosystem services.

Phases of Implementation Example

Phase 1: Assess	Phase 2: Plan	Phase 3: Implement
Evaluate early findings from the Experimental Acres pilot. Work with consultants to survey landscape of current programs which incent and assess regenerative farming practices. Investigate other funding opportunities for a regional food security adaptation survey.	Align Experimental Acres within other place-based programs. Prototype and pilot circular value matrix.	Scale up actions through knowledge transfer events. Implement municipal options to create an integrated funding source for supporting regenerative practices.

Conclusion

Our Food Future has a goal of increasing access to affordable nutritious food by 50%, but also needs to plan for how to expand this work to ensure 100% of the Guelph-Wellington community has access to nutritious foods as a right. This Action Plan includes background information describing Our Food Future's involvement in food access initiatives to date and identifies six strategic priorities moving forward:

1. **Food Access and Healthcare:** Increased distribution and utility of healthy food prescriptions and vouchers by health and social service agencies.
2. **Local Food Infrastructure:** Increased food infrastructure for food storage, processing, distribution and community building.
3. **Building a Circular Food Movement:** Increased awareness about the importance, value and right to healthy food for everyone.
4. **Integrated Funding Strategy:** Coordinated funding strategy that results in reliable funding sources for local food system work to support service delivery and service innovation.
5. **Community Food Growing Strategy:** Increased public land used for food growing and retail opportunities for growers.
6. **Regenerative Agriculture:** Increased regenerative practices used in food production, with greater understanding of the value of these ecosystem services.

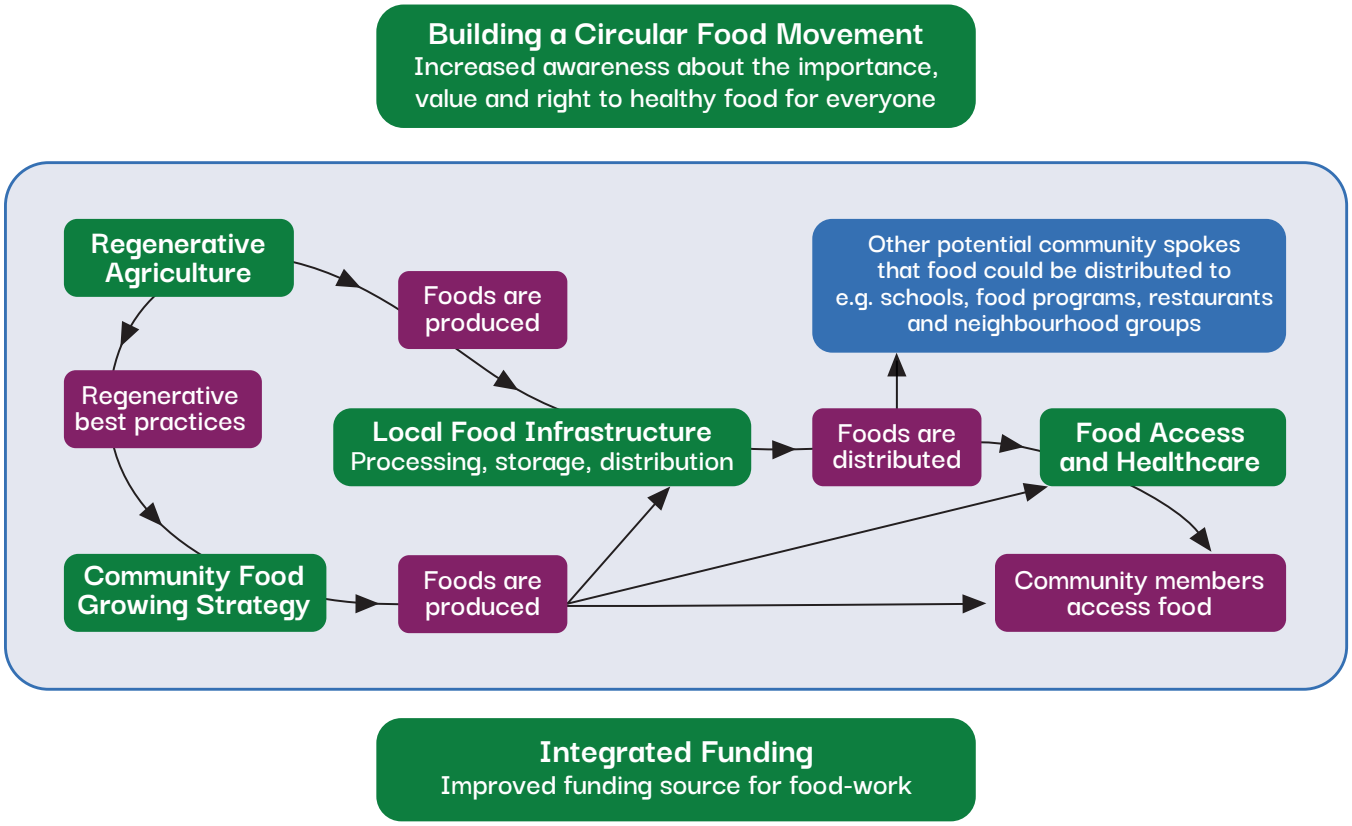
Building a Circular Food Movement
Increased awareness about the importance, value and right to healthy food for everyone
Regenerative Agriculture
Foods are produced
Other potential community spokes that food could be distributed to e.g. schools, food programs, restaurants and neighbourhood groups
Regenerative best practices
Local Food Infrastructure
Processing, storage, distribution
Foods are distributed
Food Access and Healthcare
Community Food Growing Strategy
Foods are produced
Community members access food
Integrated Funding
Improved funding source for food-work

Figure 3: Connections between the 6 strategic priorities listed in Guelph-Wellington's Food Security Action Plan.

Next Steps

In combination, the Nutritious Foods Workstream believes these strategic priorities can contribute to achieving food security for everyone in the community and set the collective direction for collaborative efforts in the long-term (Figure 3). To ensure successful implementation of the Action Plan, the following next steps are required to assess implementation capacity:

1. Seeking **continued collaboration** between City of Guelph, County of Wellington and various community partners.
2. Establishing a new, or revising the existing, Our Food Future **governance model**.
3. Creating **facilitated action tables** that would identify leads and provide structure for each strategic priority.
4. Seeking **dedicated resources** (e.g., funding, staff, space, etc.) to complete project activities .
5. Aligning the Strategic Priorities with the work and plans of the **Food System Resiliency Table**, City of Guelph and County of Wellington.

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Appendix A

Understanding our local food environment

OurFoodFuture Guelph-Wellington

Guelph-Wellington overview of findings

People make an average of 200 food-related decisions every day[1] about what, where, when, and how much to eat. Most of these decisions are unconscious, shaped by the surrounding **food environment:** the physical, social, economic, cultural, and political factors that impact our access to nutritious food.

From June 2020 to September 2021, the Nutritious Foods Workstream of the Guelph-Wellington Our Food Future initiative completed the initial phase of a Food Environment Assessment. The Assessment brings together local data and past research to provide a snapshot of food access in Guelph-Wellington. Many research projects and collaborations were formed to gather information: they included spatial mapping, surveys, focus groups, interviews, audits, and document review.

What we learned to date is summarized on the next pages. The Food Environment Assessment will be a launch point for community engagement to identify key actions we can take as a community to improve access to affordable, nutritious food all within the constrains of a circular regional food system. Throughout 2022, the Assessment will continue as we further explore food equity in our community. This work will be anchored for a Food Equity Summit in Fall 2022.

PublicHealth WELLINGTON-DUFFERIN-GUELPH Stay Well.

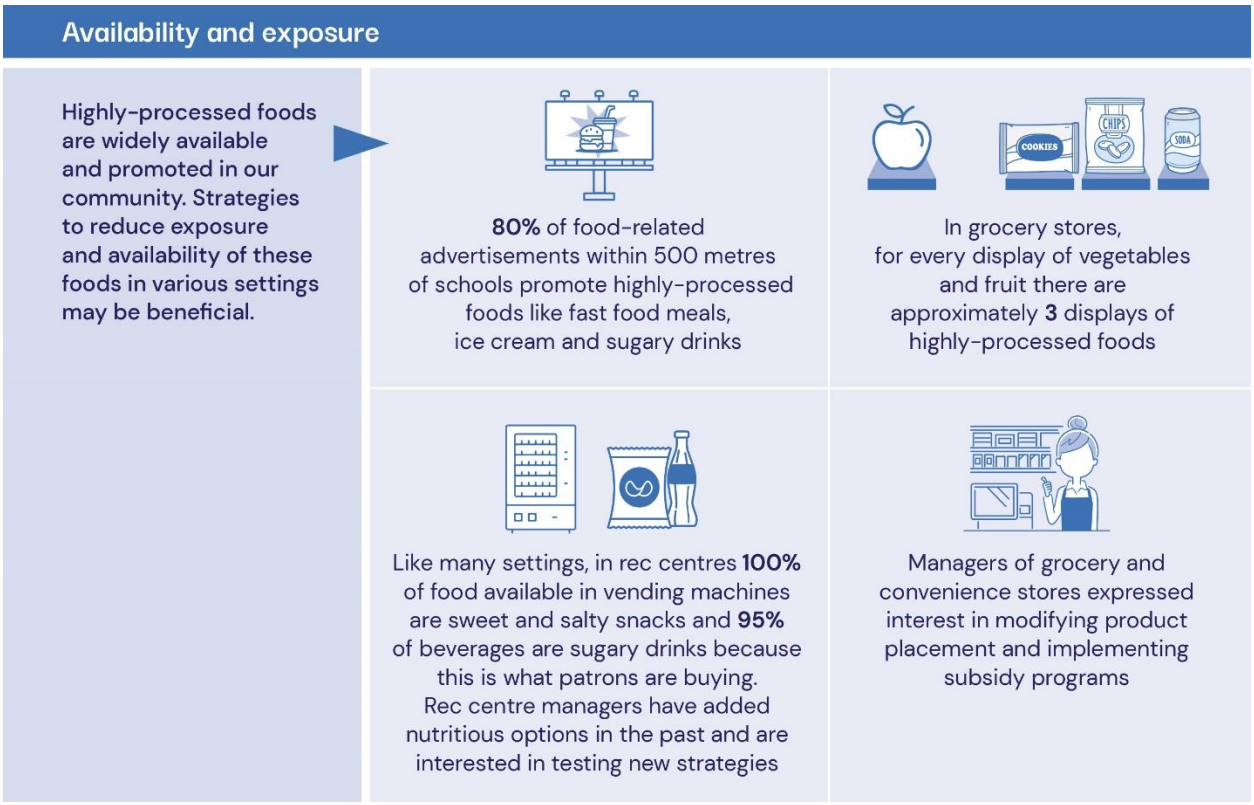
Toward Common Ground

[1] https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2006/12/mindless-autopilot-drives-people-underestimate-food-decisions

Overview: Key highlights and insights for action

From June 2020 to September 2021, the Nutritious Foods Workstream of the Guelph-Wellington Our Food Future initiative completed the initial phase of a Food Environment Assessment. The Assessment brings together local data and past research to provide a snapshot of food access in Guelph-Wellington. Many research projects and collaborations were formed to gather information including spatial mapping, surveys, focus groups, interviews, audits, and document review. What we learned to date is summarized in an infographic (Appendix D) and presented in detail in the subsequent chapters.

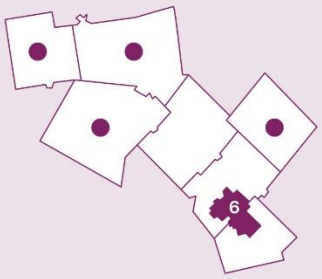
Key highlights


Availability and exposure
Highly-processed foods are widely available and promoted in our community. Strategies to reduce exposure and availability of these foods in various settings may be beneficial.
80% of food-related advertisements within 500 metres of schools promote highly-processed foods like fast food meals, ice cream and sugary drinks
COOKIES
CHIPS
SODA
In grocery stores, for every display of vegetables and fruit there are approximately 3 displays of highly-processed foods
Like many settings, in rec centres 100% of food available in vending machines are sweet and salty snacks and 95% of beverages are sugary drinks because this is what patrons are buying. Rec centre managers have added nutritious options in the past and are interested in testing new strategies
Managers of grocery and convenience stores expressed interest in modifying product placement and implementing subsidy programs

Ease of access

Certain neighbourhoods and townships have minimal access to nutritious foods, while other areas are saturated with opportunities to purchase less nutritious options. Residents may be choosing highly-processed foods due to convenience — and some think it would be helpful to get food closer to home.

Less nutritious retail food outlets (e.g., convenience stores) are found more frequently across Guelph-Wellington than nutritious outlets such as grocery stores



4 townships in Wellington County and **6 neighbourhoods** in Guelph have been identified as geographic priorities for engagement and actions to improve access

60% of grocery stores offer online shopping

People who live in rural areas of Wellington County need to travel further to get to nutritious foods

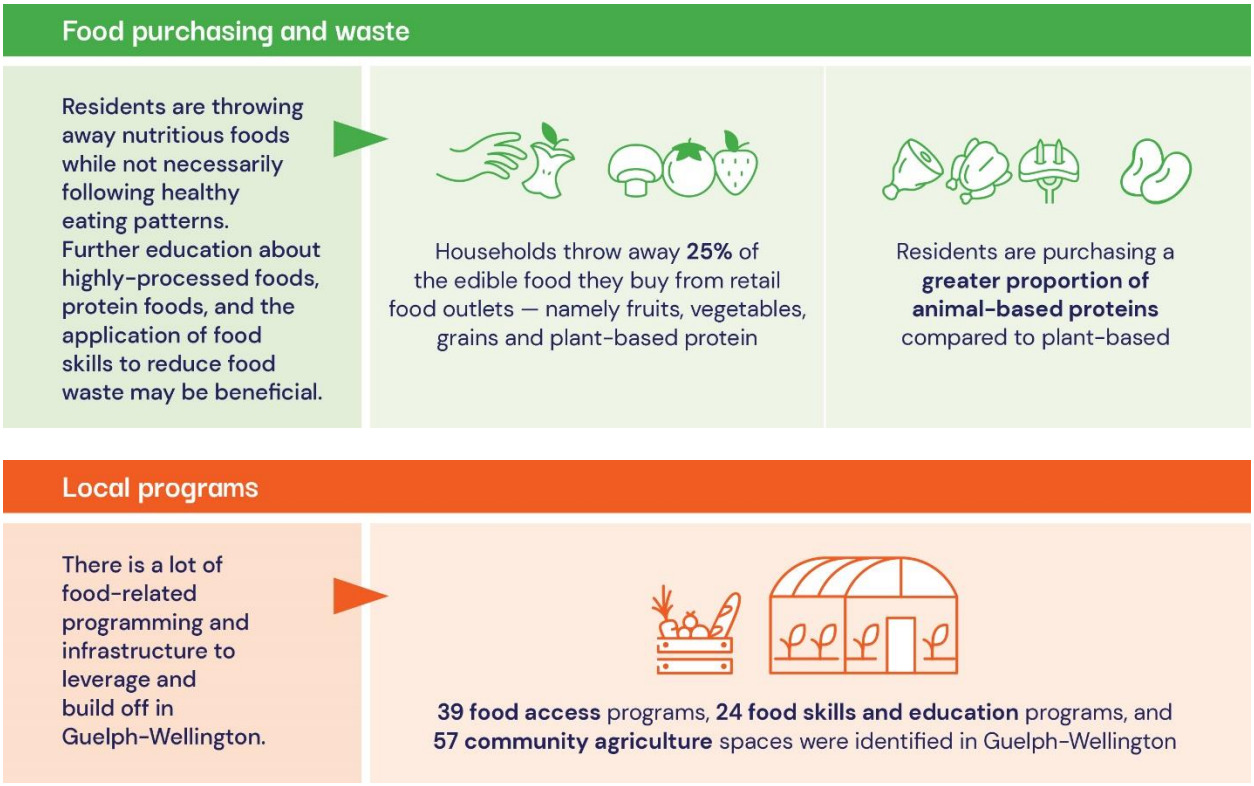
Food insecurity

Residents agree income-focused actions such as guaranteed basic income, living wages and higher social assistance rates would be helpful to address food affordability and food insecurity. Efforts to expand emergency food services that offer greater autonomy may also be beneficial.

1 in 8 (12%) Guelph-Wellington households are food insecure and almost **two-thirds (63%)** of them reported this was a new experience since the pandemic began

1 in 7 (14%) of Guelph households and **1 in 10 (10%)** Wellington County households are food insecure

Fewer than 25% of food insecure households access emergency food services to meet their immediate needs


Food purchasing and waste
Residents are throwing away nutritious foods while not necessarily following healthy eating patterns. Further education about highly-processed foods, protein foods, and the application of food skills to reduce food waste may be beneficial.
Households throw away 25% of the edible food they buy from retail food outlets — namely fruits, vegetables, grains and plant-based protein
Residents are purchasing a greater proportion of animal-based proteins compared to plant-based
Local programs
There is a lot of food-related programming and infrastructure to leverage and build off in Guelph-Wellington.
39 food access programs, 24 food skills and education programs, and 57 community agriculture spaces were identified in Guelph-Wellington

Insights for action

The work of the Nutritious Foods Workstream will culminate in a Food Security and Health Action Plan for Guelph-Wellington. Although the Action Plan will be released in early 2023, many actions to increase access to nutritious foods have already been implemented and will continue to be implemented before the end of the calendar year.

A list of potential actions to increase access to nutritious foods have been identified through several methods:

- A series of literature reviews completed by students at the University of Guelph.
- A food insecurity survey of a representative sample of 600 Guelph-Wellington residents.
- A survey of 95 Guelph-Wellington residents at increased risk of food insecurity.
- Interviews with grocery and convenience store managers and staff from municipal recreation departments.
- Consultation with Guelph-Wellington residents who have experience planning and implementing food access interventions.
- Consultation with the Nutritious Foods Workstream.

The findings from these sources and will be used to plan interventions and inform additional engagement activities. The Nutritious Foods Workstream will also engage residents and stakeholders in the planning process to ensure potential actions are effective, acceptable, and equitable.

Principles when planning interventions

On September 15, 2021, a group of Guelph-Wellington residents who have experience planning and implementing food access interventions participated in a virtual discussion about their perceptions and recommendations for actions (hereafter referred to as the "subject matter expert consultation"). The following general principles for planning food access interventions were noted during this consultation:

- **Think the intervention through from beginning to end.** Factor in the funding and resources needed, time for grant writing and reporting, etc. – or focus on sustainable funding sources.
- **Think at the Guelph-Wellington scale – and bigger.** What works in a pilot project or for a small section of the community may not work for all of Guelph-Wellington. Build from the learnings of pilot projects and promising practices identified in the literature, but consider how it would translate across Guelph-Wellington. Food insecurity is such a pervasive problem, each intervention only resolves the issue of economic access temporarily. The Our Food Future project represents one of our best opportunities to resolve the issue on a greater scale.
- **Think circular.** Use and build from resources and infrastructure. For example, provide opportunities for high school students that need volunteer hours, find ways to use bumper crops from home gardeners, and bring interventions to people (such as at a prenatal class) rather than expect people to come to the intervention.
- **Consider financial sustainability.** A lot of interventions rely on grant funding which limits long-term effectiveness. Consider ways to make the project last, such as through social enterprise.
- **Focus on where the energy is.** Understand where there are opportunities and readiness for partnerships and collaboration. Frame actions in ways that are mutually beneficial. This may mean something different for each type of stakeholder (public sector, private sector, community sector, and citizens).

In July 2021, a literature review was completed by students with the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute on facilitators to accessing nutritious foods (hereafter referred to as the "CESI Student Project").[1] This review noted that **mixed methods interventions are most effective**. Use a combination of education, policy, community engagement, and food provision (or reduction of physical and economic barriers).

Potential interventions

In Spring 2021, students of an undergraduate course on food security (NUTR 3110) at the University of Guelph completed literature reviews about interventions to improve food access.[2-5] Each aspect of food access (physical access, economic access, nutrition knowledge and food skills, and marketing, promotion, and celebration of food) was explored in a separate review. The findings from these reviews are summarized in Tables 1-4. After each table are additional considerations identified through community outreach mentioned above (i.e., surveys, interviews, consultations, and the CESI Student Project).

While the interventions have been organized by aspect of food access, many interventions address (or could be designed to address) multiple aspects of food access.

Physical access

Table 1. Interventions to increase physical access to nutritious foods, identified by a literature review completed in Spring 2021 by students of the NUTR 3110 course at the University of Guelph.

Intervention	How it may increase access	Considerations
Community gardens	• May benefit new Canadians by cultivating a sense of community, growing familiar foods, and participating in cultural traditions.	• Limited evidence for the benefit to other populations.
Farmers' markets	• Allow local producers to sell directly to consumers. • Can be established in a variety of spaces with little permanency, planning, or investment.	• May have less variety of foods (can't fulfill entire shopping list at the market). • May be more expensive. • Hours are more restricted than grocery stores.
Mobile food vending (e.g., a fresh produce bus)	• Flexible location which can increase reach and accessibility. • Can target children and youth.	• High initial cost and needs sustainable funding.
Vending machines	• Can provide nutritious food options in settings with limited options, such as recreation settings.	• Nutritious options tend to be perishable; if they do not sell,

	• Increasing availability does increase sales, even when less nutritious options are available.	they may be wasted, and it may not be profitable.
Nutritious foods in convenience stores (e.g., Healthy Corner Stores)	• Would be most successful in communities without a grocery store within walking distance or with other transportation constraints.	• May put a burden on store owners; would need support with planning or financial assistance.
Food hubs to expand the distribution and availability of local foods	• Allow producers to sell products in lower income communities without the infrastructure costs associated with traditional farmers' markets. • Can sell directly to institutions like schools, hospitals, LTC homes, and childcare centres.	• Challenges include developing an appropriate site and achieving economic sustainability.
Food subscriptions (e.g., Groceries from the SEED)	• Eliminate the challenge of transportation. • Has been done successfully in school settings.	• Challenges include infrastructure and economic sustainability.

Additional considerations identified through community outreach:

- Train the trainer. Have store owners train each other (e.g., how to keep produce fresh).
- Need to consider how people can pay for the food. Rural areas don't have all banks, so getting cash from an ATM may be a challenge. Consider setting up an agency account with a local bank that people can draw funds from.
- Quality and quantity of food available in various settings needs to be considered. For example, can we portion sizes be reduced. Need to also foster healthy attitudes about eating and acknowledge special occasion foods (i.e., like choosing fries when at a hockey game).
- Better transportation options can help increase access to food. However, residents may not be able to afford transportation options and may not own a personal vehicle. Brining food closer to where residents live may be helpful

- Farmer in residence may help community gardens address small problems before they become bigger challenges.
- Local grocery store managers indicated they would be interested in collaborating with community partners to implement actions.
- Convenience store owners report that their customers visit their store to buy snack foods; interventions in these stores would need to also focus on changing consumer attitudes related to these stores.
- Pharmacy owners may be interested in promoting food access programs, but not likely a good location for an intervention.
- Local hospitals may be good locations for nutritious foods to be available, but competing priorities often overshadow food access. Need to find champions in the setting (e.g., dietitians, food service).
- Revenue systems in municipal recreation settings may act as barriers to change (e.g., vending machines provide considerable revenue for municipalities).
- In local recreation settings efforts to increase nutritious food options in concessions have not been successful in the past; the foods do not sell, even though they are requested by patrons. Interventions in these settings have also been limited by grant funding.
- Concessions that are run by private vendors could be an opportunity because the City chooses the contracts. The Indigenous chef behind Nish in Toronto took over the canteen last summer at Crawford Lake Conservation Area in Milton – this made it a destination.
- Geddes Street Market in Elora may be a good partner or example. It is a corner store that sells primarily vegetables and fruit, prices comparable to Zehrs. Owner is interested in promoting nutritious foods.
- Vending machines in subway system in New York may be a good example. They are stocked twice a week and leftovers are sold at a local grocery store. New machines can track perishability. Need to consider factors like location, feasibility of moving stock from machine to machine.

Economic access

Table 2. Interventions to increase economic access to nutritious foods, identified by a literature review completed in Spring 2021 by students of the NUTR 3110 course at the University of Guelph.

Intervention	How it may increase access	Considerations
Price offset and reduction	• Pricing discounts of 20–25% applied to vegetables and fruit can increase the total amount purchased. • More effective when combined with nudging.	• Needs consideration for financial sustainability and feasibility.
Taxes and subsidies	• Applying discounts to nutritious foods can increase purchasing, particularly for those with economic barriers. • Higher taxation of less nutritious foods can deter purchasing.	• Money saved when buying subsidized nutritious foods may be spent on more the expensive and less nutritious foods.
Food vouchers (e.g., Fresh Food Rx, Market Bucks)	• Individuals that receive food vouchers do have increased intake of those foods.	• Often focused on vegetables and fruit, which does not increase access to other nutritious foods like whole grains and plant-based proteins.
School food programs	• Can reduce financial strain on parents and improve food insecurity in households, as well as for individual students.	• Requires a lot of funding, infrastructure, and stakeholder support.
Local food production	• Local food environments can offer food at lower and more stable prices. • Benefits the environment and local economy. • Food hubs that connect farmers directly to consumers cut costs of food and make	• Would need consideration for the food production, distribution, and retail sectors.

	food available to purchase any time.	
Universal basic income	• Ensure everyone has sufficient income to cover basic needs, including foods.	• Large-scale policy likely out of the scope of this project.
Housing status	• Ensuring affordable housing can free up income for people in poverty to cover the cost of food.	• May be out of the scope of this project.
Food charity	• Some people do not have any money for food. • Providing money or gift cards may be more effective when providing emergency food relief.	• Not an effective approach to addressing food insecurity. • Many barriers to accessing these programs, such as inaccessibility, ineligibility, and stigma. • Providing money or gift cards may be more effective when providing emergency food relief.

Additional considerations identified through community outreach:

- Rural Wellington peer support workers (upcoming initiative) could be employed for various food access program initiatives in the County.
- Among local residents, income-based solutions (e.g., guaranteed annual income, increased social assistance rates, gift cards, and living wages) were the highest-rated option among a list of actions that could help residents access nutritious foods.
- Improved accessibility and availability of foods at food charity programs was also noted as something that would help food insecure individuals; however, income-based solutions were more highly rated (note that, while most survey respondents had accessed charitable food programs, the sample included clients of these programs).
- "Double up bucks" in New York State, Michigan is an example of a food voucher program. Using a card, people can get double the vegetables and fruit with every purchase, up to $20 a day.
- Local food voucher program in Wellington County called Market Bucks had good uptake, but people with limited transportation to farmers' markets sometimes refuse the

vouchers (e.g., they can't get a ride or borrow a car). Also, some farmers' markets are small and have a lot of non-food vendors.

- Sliding scale markets by The SEED are effective overall at offsetting cost for low-income individuals, but some market locations are not profitable. Need about 200 participants per market to offset all program costs.
- Local grocery store managers reported they would be interested in implementing pricing strategies, such as a subsidy program, to lower the cost of nutritious foods.
- Woodstock grocery donation program, Operation Sharing (Food for Friends), is a food voucher example that uses gift cards to support autonomy. Families and individuals in need of emergency food assistance receive a specially designed food card in pre-determined denominations as an alternative or supplement to the food bank. Individuals can use these cards to do their grocery shopping at any of the participating grocery stores in Woodstock and Ingersoll. Program is funded through the donation of quarters by the public at local businesses. This method of providing food assistance is vital for those with special diets or serious health issues. In Guelph-Wellington, donations from grocery stores to food banks stay within the community. A program like in Woodstock addresses some of the challenges with traditional food charity and the public may trust it more as it is more transparent.
- Chit systems in store have been seen. People write down what they can't pay for and come back to pay later.
- For Guelph Wellington Seniors Centre food service, challenges include distribution to isolated/highest need individuals, resident preferences for less nutritious options, and residents' inability to cook/reheat at home.
- Garden gleaning and donations of home garden crops is a local production example. May have food safety concerns and requires infrastructure. Previous small scale fruit gleaning project in Guelph (Apple Seed Collective) needed a lot of attention.
- Subsidized housing properties have land that could be used for community gardens and growing food

Nutrition knowledge and food skills

Table 3. Interventions to increase access to nutrition knowledge and food skills, identified by a literature review completed in Spring 2021 by students of the NUTR 3110 course at the University of Guelph.

Intervention	How it may increase access	Considerations
School-based programs	• Programs in schools, particularly cross-curricular programs, are likely the most effective.	• Need to engage families and ensure children can practice knowledge and skills at home. • Requires a lot of resources and stakeholder support (i.e., school community, parents).
Food safety programs	• Identified in the literature as a gap in knowledge.	• Need to consider the barriers to practicing safe food handling, not just a lack of knowledge (e.g., laziness, inconvenience, time, financial resources).
Cooking programs	• Can lead to sustained behaviour change. • Programs provide social support and social interaction.	• Need supportive infrastructure and there are limits on reach.
Digital education programs	• Can reach a broad audience.	• Would need consideration of best practices for nutrition education to ensure effectiveness.

Additional considerations identified through community outreach:

- School programs often face resource limitations. Recommendations for effective school-based interventions include incorporating culturally appropriate nutrition education; offering teaching professional development opportunities on the topic of nutrition; developing written school nutrition policies; actively engaging families and community members.

- For women, blogs have been a successful knowledge translation tool that allows for interaction between users and nutrition professionals.
- The University of Guelph's Guelph Family Health Study ran online classes related to food skills and food waste (had to pivot from in-person classes due to pandemic). Food was delivered to participants' homes and this program worked well because participants were in their own space, using their own tools.
- Opportunities to grow food and recipes/ideas for low-cost nutritious meals were highly rated options for the public that would help increase their access to nutritious foods. However, individuals at increased risk of food insecurity rated these two options much lower.

Marketing, promotion, and celebration of food

Table 4. Interventions to increase marketing, promotion, and celebration of nutritious foods, identified by a literature review completed in Spring 2021 by students of the NUTR 3110 course at the University of Guelph.

Intervention	How it may increase access	Considerations
Point of purchase marketing techniques (e.g., product placement, nudging, etc.)	• Improves convenience and encourages choosing nutritious foods. • Can facilitate education.	• May be especially effective in institutional food service settings, such as hospital or workplace cafeterias.
Social media and social marketing (e.g., text messages, e-mails, YouTube videos, sponsorship)	• Nudging can encourage nutritious choices. • Can facilitate education. • May be especially effective at targeting youth and young adults.	• Consumers may be fore likely to choose nutritious foods if they are marketed for having a lesser environmental impact than when marketed for health benefits.
Menu placement and labelling	• Health star ratings, traffic light labelling, and other types of labelling encourage people to choose more nutritious foods.	• Labelling based on taste may be more effective than labelling based on nutritional quality.

- Making nutritious foods more prominent on menus can also influence choices.

Additional considerations identified through community outreach:

- In additional to health benefit as a motivator, could focus on environmental and community benefits of a nutritious eating pattern
- The University of Guelph's Guelph Family Health Study is working on "nudging" interventions to reduce household food waste for families enrolled in the study
- In recreation settings, food could be marketed in a way that connects to the activities occurring there (e.g., nutritious foods as "fuel"). Marketing for nutritious options needs to target children.
- Grocery store managers reported they would be interested in implementing product placement and promotion strategies, such as modifying store layout.
- An example of a digital tool is the SmartAppetite app (London, Ontario) which connects eating suggestions, recipes, and local vendors.

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Appendix B: Funded Food Access Initiatives

Below is a list of food access initiatives Our Food Future funded or helped garner funds for.

Theme 1: Physical Access Projects

1. **Two Rivers Neighbourhood Group Community Market:** Funded through Co-Lab, this project adds an additional community-based market that sells affordable year-round fresh local food in the Two Rivers neighbourhood.
2. **Cultural Meals Social Enterprise project:** Funded through Co-Lab, this project creates opportunities for immigrant women to make meal kits and cook meals from different cultures to be made available for sale.
3. **Food from Home = Food for Home:** Urban growing program builds capacity for newcomers and established residents to grow and distribute culturally relevant foods, build community and share teaching practices. Located at the Westmount Farm on land near Guelph's St. Joseph's Hospital, it brings together local urban farmers and participants from newcomer communities with experience and/or interests in growing food.
4. **Upcycle Kitchen:** Social enterprise run by The SEED rescues produce that would otherwise be discarded by distributors and transforms it into jams, sauces, soups, dips and other products. They also piloted an "Upcycle Kitchen Café," providing meals made from upcycled ingredients to the Guelph Community Health Centre staff and clients.
5. **Medicine Bundles Nimide Wayan project:** Gifts exchanged to help cover the costs of Medicine Bundles, specialized diet food boxes with traditional Indigenous food and medicine staples. The project also seeks to support Indigenous community members to explore opportunities to grow ancestral foods and medicines, intergenerational learning opportunities including an Oshkabewis project guide, as well as storytelling and knowledge sharing.
6. **Onward Willow Co-Design Project (funded by PHAC Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund):** Led by University of Guelph researchers, the goal of the project is to engage Onward Willow community members to co-design place-based interventions that support healthy eating and physical activity. This two-year project will involve working alongside community members to identify and pilot test interventions focused on improving food access and healthy eating in the Onward Willow neighbourhood. This project is a collaboration between the City of Guelph/County of Wellington Our Food Future initiative, Guelph Community Health Centre, 10C, and the University of Guelph.
7. **Farmer's Market Refresh:** A partnership between Our Food Future and the City of Guelph Farmers' Market to design and implement a public call for ideas, proposals and potential partners to explore new opportunities to augment the continued success of the weekly farmers' market.
8. **Guelph-Wellington Urban Agriculture Challenge:** A call for projects that would support circular economic recovery and accelerate food production, getting more food to the table with less environmental impact. A total of $106,000 was awarded to 10 winners spanning small community projects to transformative built-form projects.
9. **HOPE House Holding Spaces and Place project:** Funded through Co-Lab, this project offers arable land, space and food infrastructure (e.g., kitchen space) to support other projects funded by the Co-Lab process.
10. **Junction Food Network:** In Guelph's Junction neighbourhood this project completed ecological asset mapping, community asset mapping and piloted an online platform that allows home gardeners to sell (or donate) the foods they are growing directly to their neighbours.

11. **Access to fresh, nutritious culturally sensitive foods:** Funded through Spark Grants, this project led by Chalmers Community Services Centre creates easy barrier-free access to fresh, culturally sensitive foods to families from over 15 nations. Distributed foods include spices, oils, fresh produce and halal meats to enable families to cook foods that are native to them while also learning how to incorporate new vegetables and fruits in their cuisine.
12. **Walking Together to Glean and Forage:** Funded through Spark Grants, The Indigenous Food Sovereignty/Indigenous Food Security Collective [IFS/IFSC] and The SEED are walking together to develop and start a gleaning and foraging initiative. They are looking to coordinate the harvest and collection of seeds, fruits, corms, grafts, roots, nuts and barks that have been mainstays of the diets of Indigenous communities on the Lands Between The Lakes Treaty for centuries.
13. **Wellington North-Growing Healthy Rural Communities:** Funded through Spark Grants, this project brings a group of land 'providers', growers, residents, and service providers to develop and implement year one, of a multi-year plan to grow healthy food by creating an accessible and low barrier community garden in Mount Forest.

Theme 2: Economic Access Projects

1. **Food Equity with Dignity (FEWD) project:** Using a farm-to-table model with no fixed menu, a chef cooks meals from surplus food and sells the meals on a sliding-scale through a mobile catering service.
2. **Sustain and Grow Community Markets:** Funded through the Co-Lab, this projects meets ever-increasing demand and sustain free access to fresh produce at the North End Harvest Market, the Silvercreek Market and Advance Your Voice – a gathering of people with lived experience of poverty to grow their leadership in community food access.
3. **Hub and Spoke Collaborative Pilot Project and Expansion:** Funded through the Co-Lab and Spark Grants, this project tests shifting Guelph Food Bank away from direct- to-client food support and member agency to a model where the food bank will be a distribution hub for smaller neighbourhood-based food security programs. Following a successful five-month pilot with an initial three groups, GFB was awarded a Spark Grant to do a second pilot with an additional 2-3 groups.
4. **Groceries from The SEED:** Building on the success of local sliding scale markets and the Emergency Food Delivery program The SEED launched "Groceries from The SEED," a pay-what-you-choose online grocery store with a social purpose. Profits from customers paying retail-price for groceries through The SEED's online grocery store subsidize substantial discounts for low-income community residents.
5. **Parkwood Gardens Curated Meals project:** Funded through Co-Lab, this project is a partnership with HOPE House to produce weekly ready-made free meals for families.
6. **Emergency Food Home Delivery Program:** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic The SEED transformed their supply systems and mobilized a community of cooks and delivery options to distribute over 61,000 nutritious food boxes to community members in need via contact-free home delivery.
7. **Local Food Procurement for Non-Profit Programming:** Funded through Spark Grants, this project activates collective purchasing through the Elmira Produce Auction to support local producers, increase access to local foods among households that may not be able to access them otherwise, and strengthen coordination and collaboration between local agencies.
8. **Making the University of Guelph Campus a Hub for Food Initiatives:** Funded through Spark Grants, this project aims to increase students' physical and economic access to nutritious foods by creating a food hub market on the University of Guelph campus, where students can access "good food" and "pay it forward" local food security programming such as groceries by The SEED, subsidized CSA food pickups, and a sliding-scale fresh produce market.

Theme 3: Nutrition Knowledge and Food Skills Projects

1. **Guelph Film Festival - Tiny Food Docs:** An annual kids' documentary program around the theme of food as part of the Guelph Film Festival. In 2020 and 2021 the festival sponsorship resulted in eight short films from Guelph-Wellington children exploring food in their lives.
2. **Kids Get Growing:** Working with the YMCA-YWCA of Guelph and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Centre Wellington, 740 free children's gardening kits were distributed in Guelph and Fergus in 2020. The kits included soils, seeds/seedlings and educational materials to help children learn about growing their own food.
3. **Regenerative Sustainable Agriculture project:** In 2020, Masters students from Western University examined local barriers and incentives around regenerative agriculture and published their findings in a research paper. Now, Our Food Future and a team of Arrell Food Institute graduate students are creating an on-farm pilot project (The Experimental Acre) to better understand the mechanisms needed to protect farmers from risk as they transition into more sustainable practices.
4. **Anishinaabeg Ways of Living, Being and Doing project:** Funded through the Co-Lab, this project brings together people from First Nations, Inuit, and Metis communities and allies to learn from and with each other. This Indigenous-led initiative weaves through every Co-Lab challenge project.
5. **SMART Training Platform:** Led by multiple universities including the University of Guelph, this partnership between three Smart Cities Challenge finalists and winners created a high-impact training program for university students in implementation science. Focused on food and health issues, the program gives trainees access to 100+ ready-to-go projects, 100+ community partners and the expertise of 50+ researchers in epidemiology, public health, urban planning, management, economics, engineering, data sciences and more.
6. **Community Builders Lunch & Learn:** Funded through Spark Grants, this project led by the North End Harvest Market uses the power of food to gather, share food education, and offer leadership skill building workshops for people with lived experience of poverty.
7. **Collaborative Learning Community from Seed to Plate in the Town of Erin:** Funded through Spark Grants, this project brings together several established grassroots organizations collaborating to spark community led food projects by creating a program where residents take a proactive role in food production. By providing seeds (Erin Seed Lending Library), supporting residents in nurturing the land (Our Common Ground), providing support and resources to residents (Esper'Ance in Action), offering cooking and preserving classes (Various local organizations & individuals) and providing a community fridge / pantry for overflow production to benefit vulnerable communities, this project aims to create a short circuit food system.
8. **Growing Potential:** Funded through Spark Grants and led by a Big Brothers Big Sisters Centre Wellington, this project brings people together to grow, harvest and prepare food with the intention of strengthening relationships and improving food literacy.
9. **Kitchen Connection:** Funded through Spark Grants this project led by the West Village Community Development Co-operative will make changes to a neighbourhood school staff room in West Guelph to create a commercial kitchen space for food literacy opportunities.
10. **Sageing Garden Cooperative:** Funded through Spark Grants and led by the Township of Mapleton Seniors Centre for Excellence, this project provides hydroponic garden units to older adults that allow them to grow fresh vegetables year-round in their homes and share bounty with their peers.

Theme 4: Food Marketing and Promotion

1. **Reimagine Food Campaign:** The Reimagine Food Campaign and Engagement Initiative aims to inspire a circular food economy movement. Community members can learn about how circular theory comes to life, engage in lively conversations about food system transformation, build demand for circular products, take pride in our local food culture, and develop new ways of valuing food while wasting less.